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Full Length Research Paper

Socio-demographic correlates of sexual behaviours iii: A cross sectional survey of adolescents in Imo state secondary schools

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The study was designed to determine the socio- demographic correlates of sexual behaviours of adolescents in Imo State secondary schools, Nigeria. The objectives were to determine the influence of gender, environment and class levels on the sexual behaviours of the adolescents in Imo State secondary schools. A cross sectional survey design was used and sample size was 3360 (2.2%) adolescents. A structured, validated and reliable questionnaire (r = 0.79) and focus group discussion were used as the instruments for data collection. Data analysis was done using mean, z-test and ANOVA statistics. The result generally, showed that the average sexual behaviours of the adolescents were below the decision mean of 2.50 and as such the adolescents were said to be sexually inactive. In Imo State secondary schools, gender significantly influenced the sexual behaviours of the adolescents Z-cal 7.78, Z-tab 1.96, P<0.05. Environment significantly influenced their sexual behaviours Z-cal 5.92, Z-tab 1.96, P<0.05 and class level influenced the adolescents sexual behaviours significantly F-cal 3.00, F-tab 2.21 (P<0.05). The males and the rural adolescents (u 1.53 and u 1.50) respectively were more involved in sexual behaviours than the females and urban adolescents (u 1.42 and u 1.42) respectively. Of great worry is that uncontrolled adolescents sexual behaviour may expose them to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, illegal abortion and dropping out of school. Thus sex education should be intensified in these schools.

Keywords: Socio-Demographic, Correlates, Sexual, Behaviour, Adolescents, Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Socio-demographic correlates of sexual behaviours of the adolescents talk about variables that influence their sexual behaviours. Adolescence is defined both in terms of age (spanning the ages of 10 to 19 years) and in terms of phase of life by special attributes (WHO, 2003). These attributes include rapid physical growth and development, physiological, social and psychological maturity, but not all at the same time (WHO, 2003). Correlate is a causal, complementary, parallel, or reciprocal relationship, especially a structural, functional or quality correspondence between two comparable entities for example a correlation between drug abuse and crime (Wikipedia, 2005).

Wikipedia (2005) opined that sexual behaviour is a form of physical intimacy that may be directed to reproduction

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(one possible goal of sexual intercourse), spiritual transcendence, and/or the enjoyment of any activity involving sexual gratification. Sharma (2003) reported that adolescents practice a wide variety of sexual behaviours. The commonest of them is masturbation. Mutual masturbation among same sex adolescents is also common. Other forms of sexual behaviour include necking and petting, which are physical contacts in an attempt to produce erotic arousals without sexual intercourse. Sometimes petting and necking can also lead to orgasm. Sharma (2003) further noted that among the sexually active adolescents one may observe that many have single partners; others have multiple partners at a time.

Adolescents' sexual activities were clearly not and never had been without risks. There are inherent dangers of unplanned pregnancy, dropping out of school, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections/HIV/AIDS which are the major implications of sexual risk behaviours considering the grave consequences (Watneys, 1987).

The socio-demographic correlates of sexual behaviours of adolescents are factors that influence the sexual behaviours of this group. The factors under study include gender, location and class level of the adolescents. This study looked at some socio-demographic variables that influence the sexual behaviours of the adolescents in the study area. The specific purposes are to determine the sexual behaviours of the male and female adolescents in Imo State secondary schools, to determine the sexual behaviours of the urban and rural adolescents in Imo State secondary schools and to determine the sexual behaviours of the adolescents in the classes.

WHO (1994) urges the teaching of sex education in secondary schools. Thus before the commencement of sex education to help these adolescents make wise, useful and informed decision about their sex life, one needs to know their level of sexual behaviour, sexual risks and socio-demographic variables that influence their sexual behaviours. The knowledge of the variables that influence their sexual behaviours and knowing the groups that are more vulnerable to practicing premarital sex consequently will assist in the establishment of strategies required to curb the excesses that predisposed them to risky sexual behaviours.

Kirby et al (2005) reported that males initiate sex earlier than females; report more sexual partners, and greater use of condoms. However, females are more likely to contact sexually transmitted infection. The 2000 Demographic Health Survey in Malawi showed that among male respondents, 15-19 years; 16 % reported having had two or more sexual partners in 12 months preceding the survey, while only 2% of the female respondents of the same age did so (National Statistical Office and ORC Macro, 2001). McAuliffe and Ntata (1994), Hickey (1997) and San Frontiers (1997) also stated that men tend to have more sexual partners than women. National Statistical Office and ORC Macro (1997) also noted that young men who had less education, who lived in rural areas, and who were not exposed to media at least once a week were more likely to engage in multiple sexual partnership than those who were more educated, lived in urban areas and were more regularly exposed to the media respectively while Federal Ministry of Health (2001) stated that urbanization, unemployment and poverty fuelled high risk sexual behaviours including prostitution and this contributed to the increasing rate of HIV infection and other STIs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional survey design was used. The Postgraduate board of studies ethical committee, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka gave approval for the study and consent got from institutional heads (Principals of schools) and adolescents before the commencement of the study. The study population involved adolescents from 308 urban and rural areas of Imo State government owned secondary schools comprising of a population of 153, 586 students (Ministry of Education, 2005). The sample consists of three thousand three hundred and sixty (3,360) adolescents (2.2%) drawn from the study population of 153,586 adolescents. This sample was considered high enough for generalization considering Nwana (1981) formula for sample size determination which stated that 5% or fewer samples will do if the population is several thousands. Twenty eight (28) schools were sampled and 120 adolescents sampled from each school. The instruments used were the validated questionnaire consisting of 27 items and four focus group discussions. Each focus group was made of six to eight students of sam sex at a time and information extracted from the students and both consensus and divergent views were used in discussion. Section A of the questionnaire sought information on personal data of the adolescents and section B, sought information on sexual behaviours of the adolescents. The instrument was structured on weighted four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (DA) 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1, with a decision mean of 2.50. Any mean below 2.50 is sexually inactive and mean 2.50 and above is sexually active.

There was a trial test of the instrument on 20 adolescents, 10 adolescents each from government owned urban and rural secondary schools in owerri zone. The selected secondary schools were noted and were not included in the main study. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique was adopted in testing the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of r = 0.79 was got indicating that the instrument was reliable. The administration of the instrument lasted three months and data analysis done using 3260 validly returned copies of the questionnaire (Return rate 97%). Mean, z-

Table 1. The Association between Independent Research Variables and Sexual Behaviours Practiced by the Adolescents in Imo State Secondary Schools.

S/N	Variables	Group	Frequency	Mean	Level of Sexual Behaviours
1	Gender	Male	1517	1.53	Inactive
		Female	1743	1.42	Inactive
2	Location	Urban Area	1395	1.42	Inactive
		Rural Area	1865	1.50	Inactive
3	Class Level	JSS1	500	1.42	Inactive
		JSS2	552	1.44	Inactive
		JSS3	539	1.47	Inactive
		SSI	554	1.49	Inactive
		SS2	560	1.49	Inactive
		SS3	555	1.50	Inactive

Table 2. Summary of Two Sample Z-Test for Means of Gender Groups in Relation to their Sexual Behaviours.

Variable	Observations N	Mean	Known Variance	Z-cal	Z-tab	P(z<=z)
Male	1537	1.53	0.20	7.78	1.96	<0.0001
Female	1763	1.44	0.16			

Table 3. Summary of Two Sample Z-Test of Levels of Sexual Behaviours of the Urban and Rural Adolescents.

Variables	Observations N	Mean	Known Variance	Z-cal	Z-tab	P(z<=z)
Urban	1415	1.43	0.17	5.99	1.96	<0.0001
Rural	1885	1.51	0.18			

test and ANOVA were used for analysis. For the focused group discussion, the issues canvassed focused on three main areas such as adolesents sexual behaviours in the last three months, influencing factors to sexual behaviour and understanding of the consequences.

RESULTS

The above results in tables 1 and 2 show that the male and female adolescents of the study respectively had an average sexual behaviour of **mean** 1.53 and **mean** 1.42. The sexual behaviours of the male adolescents were higher than that of the female adolescents though both values were lower than the decision mean of 2.50. This shows that the sexual behaviours of the male and female adolescents in Imo State secondary schools were generally inactive and below expectation. The Z-calculated value was 7.78, the Z-tabulated value 1.96 with a significance probability of 0.0001 < 0.05.Thus the test was statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance since P< 0.05

The results in tables 1 and 3 also show that the sexual behaviours of the rural adolescents mean 1.50 were higher than that of the urban adolescents mean 1.42 though both values were lower than the decision mean of 2.50. This shows that the sexual behaviours of both urban and rural adolescents in Imo State secondary schools were generally inactive and below expectation. The Z- calculated value was 5.92, the Z-tabulated value 1.96 with a significance probability of 0.0001 < 0.05.Thus the test was statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance since P< 0.05

Further more, the results in tables 1 and 4 show that the mean sexual behaviours of the adolescents in classes JSS1 to SS3 were as follows 1.42, 1.44, 1.47, 1.49, 1.49 and 1.50 respectively. The SS3 class ranked highest followed by SS2 and SS1 while the JSS1 had the lowest mean result followed by JSS2 and JSS3. However, none of the mean ratings of the sexual behaviours of the adolescents in classes JSS1 to SS3

Table 4. Summary of ANOVA Procedure to Determine the Class Differences of the Adolescents in Relation to the Level of their Sexual Behaviours

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F-cal	F-tab	Pr>F
Class	2.92	5	0.58			
				3.22	2.21	0.0104
Error	596.81	3294	0.18			
Corrected Total	599.73	3299				

was above the expected value of 2.50. It was therefore concluded that the adolescents in each of the classes JSS1 to SS3 in Imo State secondary schools were sexually inactive. The F- calculated value was 3.00, the F-tabulated value 2.21 with a significance probability of 0.0104 < 0.05.Thus the test was statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance since P< 0.05

DISCUSSION

The present study showed that the sexual behaviour of the male adolescents was significantly higher than that of the female adolescents P<0.05. The result of this study, probably could be due to the fact that male adolescents tend to have more sexual partners because they are naturally and relatively more mischievous than their female counterparts. This is in accordance with the study of National Statistical Office and ORC Macro (2001). The 2000 demographic Health survey in Malawi showed that among male respondents, 15-19 years; 16 percent reported having had two or more sexual partners in the 12 months preceding the survey, while only 2 percent of the female respondents of the same age did so. Further more; Sunmola et al (2003) in their study in Niger State, Nigeria, noted that more males than females reported being involved in first sexual encounter. McAuliffe and Ntata (1994) ; Hickey (1997) ; and San Frontiers (1997) also found out that young men tend to have more sexual partners than young women, regardless of their marital status. From the facts above, one can conclude that the males were more sexually involved and active than the females.

In this study, the sexual behaviours of the rural adolescents were significantly higher than that of the urban adolescents (P<0.05). The researcher is of the view that in the present study, the sexual behaviours of the rural adolescents were greater than that of the urban adolescents probably due to ignorance, level of exposure, and environmental background. Those in urban areas are more exposed to media activities and the harmful effects of sexual behaviours that put them at risk compared with their rural counterparts.

This is consistent with the study done by the National Statistical Office and ORC Macro (2001), which noted that young men who had less education, who lived in rural areas, and who were not exposed to media at least once a week were more likely to engage in multiple sexual partnership than those who were more educated, lived in urban areas and were more regularly exposed to the media respectively. But this study is at variance with the study carried out by the Federal Ministry of Health (2001) which states that urbanization, unemployment and poverty fuelled high risk sexual behaviours including prostitution and this contributed to the increasing rate of HIV infection and other STIs. This dissimilarity, no doubt is attributable to the fact that the present study was limited to students who were not under serious want and were unemployed, rather they were taken care of by their parents/guardians.

There were also significant differences in the sexual behaviours of the adolescents of various classes in Imo State Secondary Schools with students in senior classes having higher sexual behaviours than their counterparts in junior classes. From this study, it was observed that the level of involvement of the adolescents in sexual activity advances as they advance in class. The senior classes SS1-SS3 had higher mean scores than the JSS1-JSS3. This result is in order as they get more matured with advancement in class and the physiological changes due to production of sex hormones as a result of maturity affect their sexual behaviours. This is could be attributed to increase in age, maturity, exposure and curiosity as they enter higher or senior classes. They also want to measure up with the sexual experiences shared by their peers. This was also confirmed by the information from focus group discussion. Based on the above information one can draw the conclusion that adolescents in senior classes are more involved in sexual behaviours compared with the adolescents in junior classes.

Focus group discussion (FGDs)

Four qualitative FGDs were conducted with the following three thematic areas were explored. Adolescents sexual behaviours in the last three months, influencing factors to sexual behaviors and understanding of the consequences. The study participants in each focus

group consisted of six adolescents of the same sex and same age range. Summary of results from the FGDs indicate that most adolescents have engaged in one form of sexual activity or the other which in most cases were considered to be risky. One adolescent from the FGD 2 succinctly puts it thus: "As you advance in class, you think it is abnormal if you have not experienced sex for the first time. Your classmates who have been involved look at you as a social misfit and to belong, you want to try".

"Males are less shy compared to the females in initiating sexual activity and feel they also have less risk (FGD3)".

"Another adolescent from FGD 4 said that the adolescents mostly in rural areas tend to rush in to sexual activities with out knowing the full weight or consequences of their actions due to lack of exposure."

"Another said we know the consequences of STD including HIV/AIDS, Pregnancy, dropping out from school, and harassment from parents and school but we usually believe that we cannot be a victim or there is always away out.

CONCLUSION

Findings from the study highlighted the sexual behaviours of the adolescents in Imo State secondary schools in relation to gender, location and class level. Though the sexual behaviours of the adolescents in Imo State secondary schools were generally inactive, it is still a problem as the extent of involvement does not augur well with their health considering the consequences **(**unplanned pregnancy, dropping out of school, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections/HIV/AIDS). This is as a result of the fact that a deviant in sexual behaviour can affect the society within a short period. Sex education is advocated for before the sexually active fall prey to consequences of premarital sexual behaviours. Also, reviews of health education programmes in several countries conclude that sex education does not encourage early sexual activity, but can delay first sexual intercourse and lead to more responsible behaviour (UNAIDS, 1997 and WHO, 1994). Comprehensive sex education programme encourages abstinence, promotes the use of condom for those who are sexually active, encourages fewer sexual partners, avoidance of casual sex, identification and treatment of sexually transmitted infections as well as teaching of sexual skills and empowering the adolescents educationally. Akanle (2007) in his study also recommended sexuality education at home, school and media to help the adolescents make wise, useful and informed decision about their sex life. These will enhance the adolescents adherence to "non sex guide" until they become matured to marry. The results of this study will also equip the health experts and guidance counselors with strategies to control sexual immorality among adolescents in Imo State secondary schools. If this is not done, the adolescents wrongly learn about sexual behaviours from the films and their peers without knowing the weight of the consequences.

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